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ABSTRACT

This report provides a brief history of the practice of distance education at Nova Southeastern University (NSU) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, one of the pioneer institutions in distance education. It offers an overview of the various distance education modalities and participants at the university, and summarizes the integration of distance education into program structure and curricula. NSU's first external degree program, the Ed.D. Program in Educational Leadership, was offered in 1972. Student acceptance of distance education was largely responsible for the university's growth in Fall term enrollment from 571 students in 1972 to 8,338 students in 1977. Student ratings of satisfaction with academic programs and services indicated that the vast majority of students achieved their educational goals and were satisfied with the educational experience. Specific curriculum and student satisfaction data are provided for NSU's Center for Psychological Studies, Center for the Advancement of Education, College of Pharmacy, Farquhar Center for Undergraduate Studies, School of Computer and Information Sciences, and the School of Business and Entrepreneurship. (Contains 35 references.) (MDM)

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DISTANCE EDUCATION AT NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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DISTANCE EDUCATION AT NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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October 1996

Research and Planning
Report 96-20

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nova Southeastern University was an early pioneer in the use of distance education as a means of offering educational opportunities to adult students. The University's first external degree program, the Ed.D. Program in Educational Leadership, was offered in 1972. This program was soon followed by the Ed.D. Program for Community College Faculty and Administrators. Student acceptance of distance education was largely responsible for the University's growth in Fall Term enrollment from 571 students in 1972 to 8,338 students in 1977.

This report identified the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' operational definition of distance learning. This report also: (1) provided a brief history of the practice of distance education at the University, (2) offered an overview of the various distance education modalities and distance education participants at the University, (3) summarized the integration of distance education into program structure and curricula, and (4) identified student self-ratings of satisfaction with academic program and services, differentiating between on-campus students and off-campus students.

Based on the University's many formal assessments of distance education as well as the many rich anecdotal comments offered as margin notes on completed survey instruments, it became abundantly evident that student acceptance of the practice of distance education is a certainty. Distance education is the only means by which many adult students can engage in formal educational activities. The assessments provided the evidence needed to conclude that distance education students are able to gain personal and professional advantage and that they equal their campus-based counterparts on every pertinent measured indicator.

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INTRODUCTION

Background

Nova Southeastern University was originally chartered by the State of Florida in 1964 as Nova University of Advanced Technology. In its present structure, the University was formed in January 1994 by the merger of Nova University and Southeastern University of the Health Sciences (*Nova Southeastern University Fact Book*, 1995).

The University is located in Florida's most urban area, with the Miami-Fort Lauderdale population at 3,192,582 permanent residents (*1990 Census of Population and Housing*). Including Palm Beach County, the University is within a 1.5 hour drive for over 4.2 million permanent residents of South Florida (*1996-97 Broward County Statistical Profile*, 1996). Field-based programs further extend the University's outreach throughout Florida and at 66 cluster locations in 21 other states in the United States and 13 sites in five foreign nations, including the Bahamas, Canada, Jamaica, Panama, and Germany (*Off-Campus Program Directory*, 1996).

The University currently maintains three major campuses in the South Florida area. The 225 acre Davie campus and the nearby Westport Education complex are approximately 10 miles east of Fort Lauderdale. The ten-acre East campus is in Fort Lauderdale, approximately one mile north of the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood-Dania International Airport. Although the University's Health Professions Division recently relocated from the North Miami Beach campus to the Davie campus, the University still maintains clinics at the North Miami Beach campus. The University also has a ten acre Oceanographic Center near Port Everglades at John U. Lloyd State Park,and the University School maintains a pre-K to 8th grade campus in Coral Springs. Excluding the recently constructed $42 million Health Professions Division complex, the book value at end of year of the University's physical infrastructure, including land, buildings, and equipment, exceeded $135 million in 1995 (*Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System Finance Survey FY 1995, Form F-1A*; 1995, p.10).

Mission Statement

From an initial enrollment of 17 graduate students in the charter class of 1967, the University has closely followed Florida's explosive growth. The University reported a Fall Term 1995 headcount enrollment of 14,692 students (*Nova Southeastern University: An Overview*, 1996). To place this statistic in context, in approximately 30 years, the University

has become the largest private university in Florida, exceeding the Fall Term 1995 enrollment at the University of Miami by 400 students (Memorandum from Blair Atherton, November 20, 1995).

The University has experienced nearly 20 percent growth in cumulative yearly credits from Calendar Years 1990 to 1994 (*Enrollment Trends and Characteristics of Nova Southeastern University's Students: Calendar Years 1990 to 1994*, 1995). As evidenced in the University's *Master Plan* (1995, p.2), rapid growth is largely the result of attention to a unique Mission Statement, where faculty and administration have purposely selected to place an emphasis on a largely adult client base and the use of technology in teaching modality:

> Nova Southeastern University provides quality educational programs of distinction from pre-kindergarten through the doctoral level at times and locations convenient to students, prepares students for leadership roles in business and the professions, encourages research and community service, and fosters an atmosphere of creativity and innovation utilizing technology where appropriate.

Unlike the other regionally accredited institutions in South Florida that offer bachelor's, first professional, or graduate degrees, the University emphasizes education for professional advancement of adult students, augmented by the use of innovative delivery formats and technology when appropriate, to meet student and community needs.

Purpose of This Report

A primary purpose of this report is to offer an operational definition of distance learning, while equally recognizing that there are many professionals who may offer a different vision of the practice of distance learning. With focus on activities at the University, the purpose of this report is to: (1) provide a brief history of the practice of distance education at the University, (2) to offer an overview of the various distance education modalities and distance education participants at the University, (3) to summarize the integration of distance education into program structure and curricula, and to (4) identify student self-ratings of satisfaction with academic program and services, differentiating between on-campus students and off-campus students.

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools clearly stated in *Guidelines for Planning Distance Learning Activities* (1992, p. 4) that the University must:

> involve the same systematic analysis of the effectiveness of distance learning programs in carrying out the purpose of the institution and in complying with the *Criteria for Accreditation* as it does with other aspects of the institution's efforts.

As such, this report is also presented as one aspect of many activities at the University used to assess the effectiveness of distance learning.

DEFINITION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION

A review of resources on the Internet indicated that there may be as many definitions of distance education as there are practitioners of this teaching modality. A summary of competing definitions, provided by the Distance Education Clearinghouse, was found at URL <http://www.uwex.edu/disted/definition.html>, the University of Wisconsin's Extension Division home page:

- Distance Education is defined as a planned teaching/learning experience that uses a wide spectrum of technologies to reach learners at a distance and is designed to encourage learner interaction and certification of learning.

  University of Wisconsin-Extension, Continuing Education Extension, Distance Education subgroup

- Distance Education is instructional delivery that does not constrain the student to be physically present in the same location as the instructor. Historically, Distance Education meant correspondence study. Today, audio, video, and computer technologies are more common delivery modes.

  Virginia Steiner, The Distance Learning Resource Network (DLRN)

- Distance education (or correspondence/home study) is the enrollment and study with an educational institution which provides lesson materials prepared in a sequential and logical order for study by students on their own. When each lesson is completed the student makes available, by fax, mail, or computer, the assigned work for correction, grading, comment, and subject matter guidance by qualified instructors. Corrected assignments are returned to the student, an exchange which provides a personalized student-teacher relationship.

  The Distance Education and Training Council (DETIC)

- At its most basic level, distance education takes place when a teacher and student(s) are separated by physical distance, and technology (i.e., voice, video, data, and print), often in concert with face-to-face communication, is used to bridge the instructional gap.

  Engineering Outreach staff at the University of Idaho; from the guide Distance Education at a Glance

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, in *Criteria for Accreditation* (1996, p.40-41), "recognizes the legitimacy of distance learning, such as that conveyed through off-campus classroom programs, external degree programs, branch campuses, correspondence courses, and various programs using electronically-based instruction offered geographically distant from the main campus." In *Guidelines for Planning Distance Learning Activities* (1992, p.1), the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools defined distance learning as:

> that educational process that occurs when instruction is delivered to students physically remote from the main campus, the location or campus of program origin, or the primary resources that support instruction. In this process, the requirements for a course or program may be completed through remote communications with instructional and support staff including either one-way or two-way written, electronic, or other media forms.

Although each of the preceding definitions of distance education has merit, the University is accountable to the Southern Association, and it is abundantly clear that the Southern Association will use their operational definition of distance learning when assessing the integration of distance education into the University's mission and organizational structure.

A HISTORY OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT THE UNIVERSITY

The University's Mission Statement offers a sense of how the careful blending of distance education and technology has supported growth from a 1967 charter class of 17 doctoral students to a 1995 Fall Term enrollment of 14,692 students (*Nova Southeastern University: An Overview*, 1996). Based on projected enrollment trends, it is anticipated that the University will serve an unduplicated cumulative headcount enrollment of over 21,000 students in Calendar Year 1996. What is so unique about this enrollment statistic is the observation that, with approximately 12,000 individual students attending one or more University classes in Broward County during Calendar Year 1996, approximately 9,000 students will attend class away from Broward County, through cluster-based instruction, computer-mediated communication, or enrollment in some other type of distance education format (*Place of Class Attendance at Nova Southeastern University: Calendar Years 1990 to 1994*, 1996).

The University's original mission, based on campus-based instruction to a small group of graduate students in the Behavioral Sciences, Physics and Physical Chemistry, and Oceanography did not support the University's current growth pattern. By 1971, four complete years after the University's charter class first enrolled in courses, enrollment had grown to a Fall Term enrollment of only 198 students, with all instruction offered in a traditional format on the University's Davie campus. In 1972, in an effort to increase outreach to specific markets and to also enhance fiscal stability, the University offered

external degree programs at the doctoral level (*Nova Southeastern University Fact Book*, 1996). The first external degree program offered by the University was the Ed.D. Program in Educational Leadership. This program was soon followed by the Ed.D. Program for Community College Faculty and Administrators.

The initial use of distance education (complemented by the use of adjunct faculty) was widely received by students, and in the mid-1970s the University experienced exceptional growth in enrollment. Fall Term enrollment grew to 571 students in 1972, 1,483 students in 1973, 2,279 students in 1974, 3,399 students in 1975, 6,363 students in 1976, and 8,338 students in 1977 (*Nova Southeastern University Fact Book*; 1995, p.38). Although student acceptance of these distance education programs was critical to the University's early growth, it is equally important to recall that distance education has been fully encompassed in the University's accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Indeed, the distance education modalities currently in use at the University, including computer-mediated communication, were fully integrated into the University's last reaffirmation of accreditation, in 1985, by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' (*Self-Study: 1983 - 1985*, 1985).

A history of distance education modalities at the University is presented in Table 1. This table demonstrates how the University has seized upon basically common-sense means of offering instruction to adult students who are so often, otherwise, excluded from educational opportunities when instruction is offered in traditional formats:

- In the 1970s, air travel was the most appropriate means of sending faculty to students dispersed throughout the United States.
- As a precursor to Higher Education's current fascination with the Internet, in the mid-1980s the University was one of the first institutions to use telecommunications and computer-mediated communication to reach students.
- With improved band width transmission rates and other evolutionary changes in telecommunications, compressed video and audio-teleconferencing have become favored distance education modalities in the 1990s.

DISTANCE EDUCATION MODALITIES AND PARTICIPANTS

Although the University offers many highly-respected academic programs that are solely campus-based, distance education has a major role in University enrollment, budgeting, and governance. In response to the United States Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics and the *Survey on Distance Education Courses Offered by Higher Education Institutions* (1995), the University identified that it offered 76 unique distance

Table 1

Distance Education Delivery Models Used at Nova Southeastern University

TIME PERIOD	DELIVERY MEDIUM	DELIVERY PROCESS
1972-present	Jet Airplane	Faculty meet with groups of students (clusters) throughout the United States, offering instruction on weekends.
1983-present	Telecommunications	Faculty and students use computers and telephone-based connectivity, using electronic mail and bulletin boards for communication.
1985-present	Electronic Classroom	The use of computer-based telecommunications is enhanced by development of the Electronic Classroom (ecr). By altering the UNIX® real-time *talk* command, a teacher can communicate in real-time with up to 52 students attending class from their own homes or offices.
1992-present	Audio Tele-conferencing	Faculty use simple telephone-conferencing technology to conduct an audioconference with students at two or more cluster sites.
1992-present	Audiobridge	Audio teleconferencing is improved, allowing students and faculty full interaction in real-time from their homes or offices.
1994-present	Compressed Video	Faculty are able to use real-time audio and video to interact with groups of students at multiple cluster locations.

Note. Data are from the University's *Master Plan* (1995).

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education courses (i.e., courses with different catalog numbers) in Academic Year 1994 to 1995.

The various distance education delivery models used by academic centers at the University are the focus of Table 2. The many delivery models reflect both the interests and the skill levels of diverse constituencies at the University:

- Faculty and students in the Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education use a large array of distance education modalities, including field-based instruction at sites distant from the Davie campus, compressed video at selected receiving sites, and computer-mediated communication and audiobridge telecommunication into the homes of individual students.

- The practice of distance education and the use of various modalities is even more complex in the School of Computer and Information Sciences. As previously identified in *Graduates of the School of Computer and Information Sciences Offer Judgment on Their Experience with Nova Southeastern University* (1996), the School of Computer and Information Sciences uses a variety of computer-mediated distance education and campus-based instructional modalities. Some students enroll in campus-based classes that are quite traditional in terms of lecture-based instruction. Other students enroll in classes that combine computer-mediated communication and traditional lecture. An additional set of students enrolls in classes that are totally computer-mediated, with no face-to-face contact between the instructor and students during course enrollment. These modalities are by no means exclusive throughout the entire curriculum. Students in the School of Computer and Information Sciences may experience a wide variety of computer-mediated instructional modalities during matriculation in their academic programs.

- In contrast, other academic centers have less need for this large array of teaching modalities, and instead find that one or two distance education modalities meet the needs of faculty and students. As an example, the Oceanographic Center reported that phone, fax, and electronic mail adequately meet the teaching modality needs for their single distance education course, *Beyond the 5000 Days* (*Status Report on Institutional Effectiveness: 1995 - 1996*, 1996).

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Table 2

Distance Education Delivery Models at Nova Southeastern University By Academic Center

Academic Center	Delivery Models
[illegible] Center for the Advancement of Education	• Field-based Activities • Computer Mediated Communication • Audiobridge • Compressed Video
Farquhar Center for Undergraduate Studies	• Field-based Activities
School of Business and Entrepreneurship	• Field-based Activities • Computer Mediated Communication
Center for Psychological Studies	• Field-based Activities
Health Professions Division	• Compressed Video
School of Computer and Information Sciences	• Field-based Activities • Computer Mediated Communication
Family and School Center	• Field-based Activities
Oceanographic Center	• Computer Mediated Communication

Note. Data are from the University's *Status Report on Institutional Effectiveness: 1994 to 1995* (1995).

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INTEGRATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION INTO PROGRAM STRUCTURE AND THE CURRICULUM

The University has history of more than 25 years in the use of distance education with adult students enrolled in practitioner-oriented academic programs. Recent statistics on distance education at the University are presented in Table 3 and Table 4, and in Figure 1 and Figure 2. As general trends:

- Approximately four-fifths of all students attend class in Florida.
- Approximately two-thirds of all students attend class in the immediate South Florida area, a slight increase in the last few years.
- The University's continued growth in South Florida was in place before the 1994 merger between Nova University and Southeastern University of the Health Sciences and the campus-based programs offered in the Health Professions Division.

The University's *Master Plan* (1995, p.51-59) presented, at the University-wide level, how distance education is integrated into mission-oriented activities. In an attempt to gain a sense of how distance education is integrated into the curriculum and operational activities at the program level, academic deans with major distance education components were queried (Memorandum from John Losak to Francis DePiano, Richard Goldman, William Hardigan, Stuart Horn, Edward Lieblein, Randolph Pohlman; March 11, 1996) and asked to respond to a variety of issues related to this topic, including:

- Which distance education models do you use in your center?
- Do you use other distance education models?
- Do you combine the use of various distance education models? If so, please offer examples of how students and faculty use these models for instructional purposes.
- Which programs/majors/specializations in your center are offered through the use of distance education?
- Do you only offer a few individual courses through distance education? If so, which courses do you offer through the use distance education, and how did you select these courses?
- Please explain the differences and commonalities between the campus-based component of academic programs in your center and their distance education counterparts.

Table 3

Nova Southeastern University Student Enrollment (Unduplicated, Cumulative Headcount) by State of Class Attendance: Calendar Years 1990 to 1994

State of Class Attendance	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994		Change 1990-1994	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Alabama	24	0.1	35	0.2	52	0.3	50	0.3	42	0.2	18	75
Arkansas	3	0.0	7	0.0	9	0.0	18	0.1	18	0.1	15	500
Arizona	110	0.6	147	0.8	183	1.0	191	1.0	184	0.9	74	67
California	131	0.8	147	0.8	152	0.8	174	0.9	159	0.8	28	21
Colorado	23	0.1	28	0.2	23	0.1	15	0.1	21	0.1	-2	-9
Delaware	212	1.2	227	1.3	249	1.4	223	1.2	192	0.9	-20	-9
Florida	14,335	83.5	14,957	83.1	15,050	82.7	15,126	82.3	17,139	82.3	2,804	20
Georgia	146	0.9	177	1.0	193	1.1	173	0.9	173	0.8	27	18
Illinois	29	0.2	60	0.3	76	0.4	97	0.5	100	0.5	71	245
Indiana	68	0.4	72	0.4	64	0.4	63	0.3	95	0.5	27	40
Iowa	64	0.4	61	0.3	64	0.4	50	0.3	66	0.3	2	3
Louisiana	103	0.6	110	0.6	74	0.4	75	0.4	41	0.2	-62	-60
Massachusetts	69	0.4	84	0.5	92	0.5	114	0.6	123	0.6	54	78

Table 3 (Continued)

State of Class Attendance	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994		CHANGE 1990-1994	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Missouri	26	0.1	32	0.2	33	0.2	49	0.3	49	0.2	23	88
Nevada	249	1.5	274	1.5	259	1.4	258	1.4	249	1.2	0	0
Pennsylvania	82	0.5	106	0.6	121	0.7	176	1.0	229	1.1	147	179
South Carolina	100	0.6	118	0.7	116	0.6	154	0.8	222	1.1	122	122
Texas	36	0.2	53	0.3	62	0.3	79	0.4	84	0.4	48	133
Vermont	25	0.2	25	0.1	43	0.2	45	0.2	48	0.2	23	92
Virginia	197	1.2	204	1.1	255	1.4	249	1.4	276	1.3	79	40
Washington	31	0.2	34	0.2	25	0.1	32	0.2	31	0.2	0	0
Wisconsin	29	0.2	12	0.1	22	0.1	21	0.1	16	0.1	-13	-45
Wyoming	18	0.1	4	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	-18	--
Foreign	480	2.8	318	2.9	804	4.4	929	5.1	1,242	6.0	762	159
Unidentified	575	3.3	511	2.8	180	1.0	27	0.1	24	0.1	-551	-53
TOTAL	17,165		18,003		18,201		18,388		20,823		3,658	21

Note: Data refer to unduplicated, cumulative headcount enrollment

Data for Calendar Year 1994 reflect the inclusion of 1,472 students in the Health Professions Division, due to the January 1, 1994, merger between Nova University and Southeastern University of the Health Sciences.

Source: SIS 10/95

Table 4

Nova Southeastern University Student Enrollment (Unduplicated, Cumulative Headcount) by Place of Florida-Based Class Attendance: Calendar Years 1990 to 1994

Place of Class Attendance	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994		Change 1990-1994	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
South Florida												
Broward County	7,644	45	8,112	45	8,552	47	8,881	48	9,393	45	1,749	23
Dade County	1,693	10	1,778	10	1,709	9	1,816	10	3,414	16	1,721	102
Palm Beach County	790	5	787	4	728	4	684	4	633	3	-157	-20
Sub-Total	10,127	60	10,677	59	10,989	60	11,381	62	13,440	65	3,313	33
Other Florida Areas												
Daytona Beach	187	1	282	2	192	1	149	<1	205	<1	18	10
Fort Myers	406	2	307	2	263	1	225	1	223	1	-183	-45
Fort Pierce	153	<1	171	<1	124	<1	101	<1	76	<1	-77	-50
Gainesville/Ocala	346	2	461	3	420	2	366	2	294	1	-52	-15
Jacksonville	285	2	364	2	347	2	341	2	329	2	44	15
Key West	25	<1	25	<1	29	<1	20	<1	10	<1	-15	-60
Melbourne	216	1	256	1	244	1	247	1	252	1	36	17
Orlando	868	5	846	5	849	5	705	4	739	4	-129	-15
Sarasota/Bradenton	202	1	198	1	208	1	223	1	198	<1	-4	-2
Tallahassee	130	<1	129	<1	81	<1	86	<1	70	<1	-60	-46

Table 4 (continued)

PLACE OF CLASS ATTENDANCE	1990		1991		1992		1993		1994		CHANGE 1990-1994	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Tampa Bay	864	5	906	5	940	5	1,019	6	1,052	5	188	22
West Florida	29	<1	35	<1	47	<1	63	<1	70	<1	41	141
Discrepancy	572	3	324	2	323	2	216	1	209	<1	-363	-63
Sub-Total	4,283	25	4,304	24	4,067	22	3,761	20	3,727	18	-556	-13
Florida Total	14,410	84	14,981	83	15,056	83	15,142	82	17,167	82	2,757	19
Non-Florida or Unidentified	2,755	16	3,022	17	3,145	17	3,246	18	3,656	18	901	33
TOTAL	17,165		18,003		18,201		18,388		20,823		3,658	21

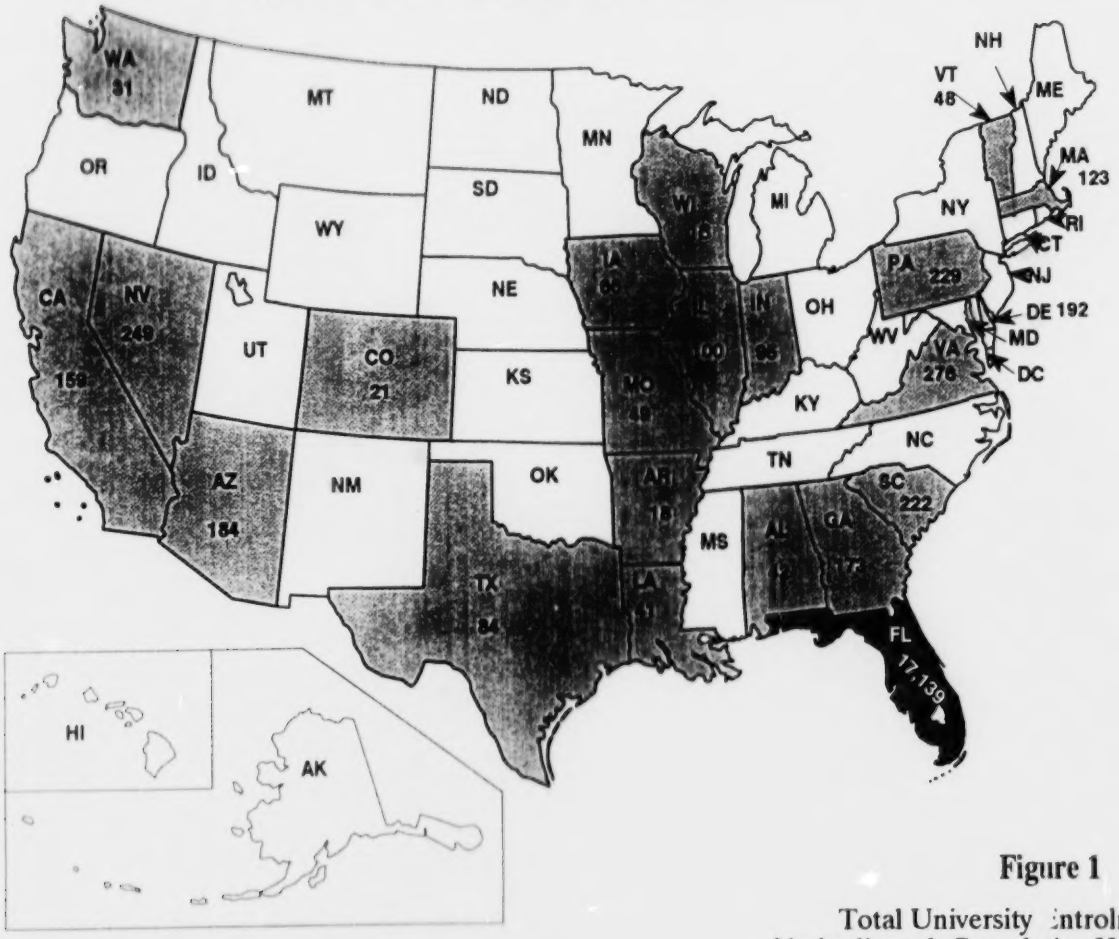
Note. Data refer to unduplicated, cumulative headcount enrollment.

Data for Calendar Year 1994 reflect the inclusion of 1,472 students in the Health Professions Division, due to the January 1, 1994, merger between Nova University and Southeastern University of the Health Sciences.

Discrepancy refers to students who are known to attend class in Florida, but a specific cluster is not identified in the Student Information System (SIS). In some cases, discrepancy is the result of incorrect data entry in the SIS. In other cases, discrepancy is the result of registering cluster as an activity (such as continuing services, *CSERV*) instead of a geographic location.

Source: SIS 10/95

Nova Southeastern University Student Enrollment by State of Class Attendance: Calendar Year 1994



Prepared by Research and Planning
Source: SIS 03/95

Figure 1

Total University Enrolment = 20,823
Unduplicated, Cumulative Headcount: CY 1994
(Foreign or Unidentified - 1,266)

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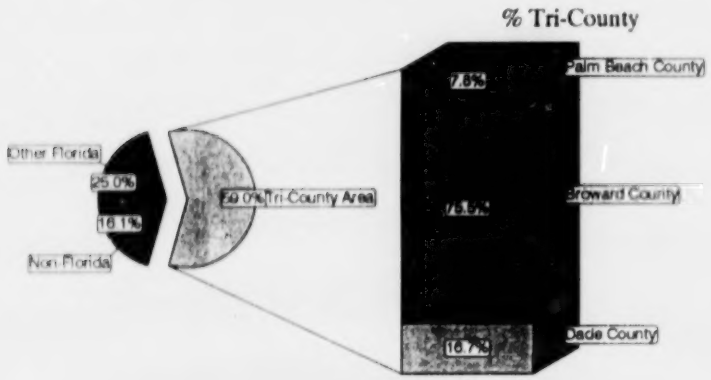
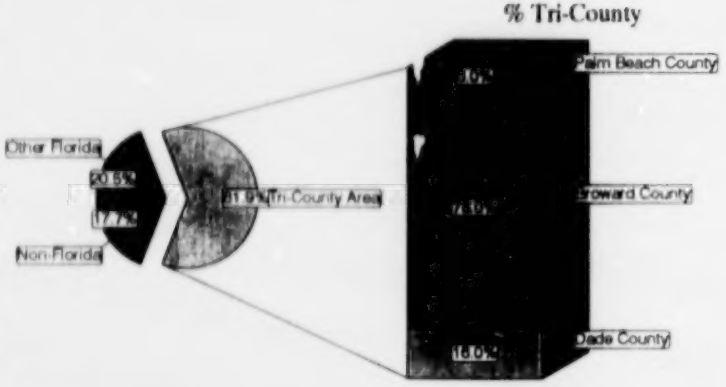
Nova Southeastern University

Unduplicated, Cumulative Headcount Enrollment

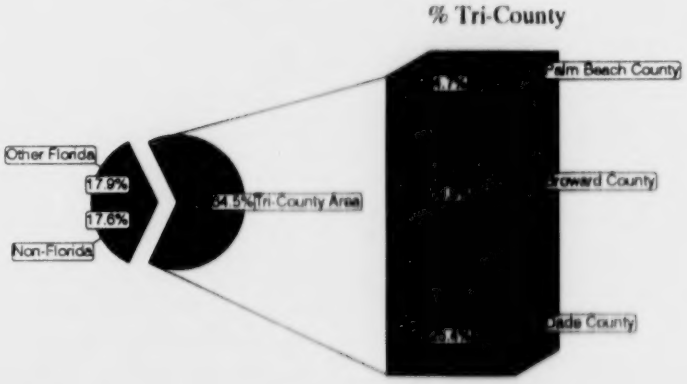
Calendar Year 1990



Calendar Year 1993



Calendar Year 1994



Class attendance in Dade County abruptly increased in Calendar Year 1994 due to the University's merger and the sudden inclusion of 1,472 students in the Health Professions Division attending class on the North Miami Beach Campus. These students will attend class in Broward County when the Health Professions Division relocates to the Davie Campus in July 1996.

Prepared by Research and Planning 2/96

Tri-County refers to Broward County, Dade County, and Palm Beach County.

- Is the curriculum, including sequence as well as content, identical? If the curriculum is not identical, what processes do you use to ensure parity?

- Who is responsible for administrative control of distance education in your center? How do you integrate the day-to-day, as well as long-term activities, of field-based administrators into the your center's administration?

- Explain how you establish the need for a distance education program at a specific site.

- Describe the structure for administrative responsibility of distance education activities in your center. Possibly by using faculty selection as a cogent example, differentiate between decision-making at the local level and decision-making at the program level.

- Identify how you determine the interest, ability, and competency of the faculty to offer instruction through the use of distance learning activities.

- Illustrate the processes used to make learning resources and services available to distance learning students.

- Detail the scope and locus of control of student support services, including:

    - academic advising
    - admissions
    - career resource and placement services
    - computing
    - financial aid
    - library services
    - program orientation
    - registration
    - remedial services
    - testing

- Describe your center's plan for systematically evaluating distance learning programs and how evaluation findings are used for program improvement.

Center for Psychological Studies

In addition to campus-based instruction, field-based distance education modalities are used for the M.S. Mental Health Counseling program and the M.S. School Guidance and Counseling program. The only difference between the two formats is the structure of how classes are offered:

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- Field-based courses are offered on weekends at sites throughout Florida.

- Campus-based courses are offered in a traditional day-program semester format.

Otherwise, programs are identical in curriculum, degree requirements, academic standing, faculty, and 45 contact hours for each course. Although input is received from field-based personnel, administrators on the Davie campus are responsible for program organization, and full-time faculty on the Davie campus are responsible for curriculum development.

Services for students enrolled at the field-based sites throughout Florida are equivalent to services offered to students on the Davie campus:

- Students also have access to local libraries, with special accommodations for the use of these local libraries coordinated through the University's Office of Resource Information for External Programs (*Directory of Selected Academic Libraries Near Off-Campus Program Sites*, 1996).

- As appropriate, students are able to use the University's Electronic Library to gain access to over 20 online databases.

- Students work with the University's Office of Student Financial Aid for assistance with financial aid programs, grants, loans, and scholarships.

The Center for Psychological Studies uses a variety of measures to assess the efficacy of instruction and program outcomes for field-based students. Recent findings include the following:

- The Center for Psychological Studies administers a common mid-program assessment instrument to campus-based and field-based master's students. Since the 1991/92 school year, field-based students have consistently provided higher scores than their campus-based counterparts on questions related to satisfaction with curriculum, faculty, and advisement (*Status Report on Institutional Effectiveness: 1995 - 1996*; 1996, pp.117-118).

- The Center for Psychological Studies also administers a common comprehensive examination to campus-based and field-based master's students. Field-based students have a lower failure rate on this common exam than their campus-based counterparts (Memorandum from Joyce Silverman to Karen Grosby; July 29, 1994).

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Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education

Of the six programs offered in the Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education, five programs use distance education modalities to reach students away from the Davie campus: National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders, Ed.D. Program for Higher Education, Ed.D. and M.S. Programs in Education and Technology, Graduate Teacher Education Program (Ed.S. and M.S.), and the M.S. Program in Life Span Care and Administration. The distance education programs in this Center are structured in the same manner as their campus-based counterparts. Although input is received from field-based personnel, administrators on the Davie campus are responsible for program organization, and full-time faculty on the Davie campus are responsible for curriculum development.

Services for students enrolled in courses offered on the Davie campus are equivalent to services offered at off-campus sites:

- As appropriate, students are able to use the University's Electronic Library to gain access to over 20 online databases.
- Students also have access to local libraries, with special accommodations for the use of these local libraries coordinated through the University's Office of Resource Information for External Programs (*Directory of Selected Academic Libraries Near Off-Campus Program Sites*, 1996).
- Along with guidance offered by cluster coordinators and adjunct personnel, students also use the services of Davie campus-based advisors and full-time faculty for academic advising.
- Students meet with local site personnel for program orientation. In most cases, Davie campus-based administrators and/or faculty also attend these orientations.
- Students work with the University's Office of Student Financial Aid for assistance with financial aid programs, grants, loans, and scholarships.

Elements of distance education assessment activities in the Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education are found in *Status Report on Institutional Effectiveness: 1995 - 1996* (1996). The Center has also prepared a series of assessments that provide campus-based personnel with additional information on distance education students and their experiences in the academic programs offered by the Center:

- *FCAE Students/Participants: Where are they From?* (Fall 1995)
- *The "Typical" FCAE Student/Participant.* (Fall 1995)

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- *Time to Complete Degrees: 1989-90 Through 1994-96* (Winter 1996)

- *Graduation Rate by Ethnicity* (Winter 1996)

In a report recently prepared by Research and Planning (*Results from a Common Final Examination: A Comparison Between On-Campus Students and Off-Campus Students*, 1996), comparisons were made between on-campus students and off-campus students in the Graduate Teacher Education Program and results from a common final examination:

- The final examination was offered to six separate groups of students enrolled in the same course.

- After analysis of answers to the 30 common final examination questions given to all students, it was observed that off-campus students had higher scores (e.g., more correct answers from the 30 common questions) on the final examination than their on-campus counterparts (alpha $\leq$ .01). On-campus students had approximately 23 correct answers to the 30 common questions while off-campus students had approximately 26 correct answers to the same set of questions.

College of Pharmacy

Organized in the Health Professions Division, the College of Pharmacy offers a Doctor of Pharmacy (Pharm.D.) program on the Davie campus. Off-campus activities in this College involve the simultaneous transmission of live lectures presented to students on the Davie campus to students at distant sites through the use of compressed interactive video. Although input is received from field-based personnel, administrators on the Davie campus are responsible for program organization and full-time faculty on the Davie campus are responsible for curriculum development.

The Assistant Dean for Professional Affairs in the College of Pharmacy has the immediate responsibility for quality assurance of distance education offerings. As part of the quality assurance process:

- All courses are taught in a traditional format, with on-campus students and off-campus students viewing and participating in the same lecture, which is supported by the interactive compressed video feature.

- Tests and assignments are developed by faculty based at the Davie campus.

- A formal assessment of the learning experience is administered at the end of the semester. Along with statements that address the course and the instructor, the

assessment also addresses the quality of transmitted lectures and the physical learning environment.

- There are no differences between on-campus students and off-campus students in regard to admission or graduation requirements.

- There is no difference between the content of courses taught to on-campus students and off-campus students. Instruction is identical and simultaneous to both groups.

Because this College has only recently implemented distance education activities, summative evaluations of the efficacy of this lecture-based modality with Pharm.D. students have not yet been attempted. Research and Planning will include College of Pharmacy doctoral students in future empirical assessments of distance education.

Farquhar Center for Undergraduate Studies

The Farquhar Center for Undergraduate Studies offers the Bachelor's of Professional Management program and the Teacher Education program to students throughout Florida and selected international sites. Although input is received from field-based personnel, administrators on the Davie campus are responsible for program organization, and full-time faculty on the Davie campus are responsible for curriculum development.

Cluster coordinators have an important role as liaisons between administrators and faculty on the Davie campus and local personnel. As such, cluster coordinators have regular and *ad hoc* meetings and communication with campus-based personnel. While remaining sensitive to local needs, it is important to recall that field-based activities are integrated into program structure by campus-based administrators and faculty:

- Potential adjunct personnel are identified by cluster coordinators, who have extensive professional networks at the local level. Even so, full-time administrators on the Davie campus have exclusive oversight of approval, hiring, and retention of adjunct faculty.

- Many field-based sites are in corporate training centers, local schools, or corporate office space rented by the University. These facilities are usually fully equipped with audio-visual devices. The University supplements any learning aids that may be needed by individual members of the faculty.

- Students have access to local libraries, with special accommodations for the use of these local libraries coordinated through the University's Office of Resource Information for External Programs (*Directory of Selected Academic Libraries Near*

Off-Campus Program Sites, 1996). Students also have access to campus-based library materials through the University's Off-Campus Library Services group.

- Evaluation of instruction is systematic and pervasive throughout the Center, including field-based instruction. A tracking system is used for each site. This system provides campus-based administrators with:

  - a profile of each potential instructor

  - the percentage of terminally qualified faculty (in recognition of the criterion that "At least 25 percent of the discipline course hours in each undergraduate major **must** be taught by faculty members holding the terminal degree, usually the earned doctorate, in that discipline." *Criteria for Accreditation*; 1996, p.47)

  - a record of all student evaluations for instructors who previously taught in the cluster

School of Computer and Information Sciences

In the other academic centers that practice distance education, the physical entity of a specific cluster or site provides a degree of identification of distance education locus of instruction. With the exception of one master's-level cluster based in Tampa, the concept of physical entity beyond the Davie campus has basically no relevance in the School of Computer and Information Sciences, since real time computer-mediated communication and delayed time computer-mediated communication are the dominant distance education modalities. Although distance education in this School is based on the use of forms of high technology, the School is in parity with other academic centers in how programs are organized and the curriculum is developed. Administrators at the Fort Lauderdale East campus are responsible for program organization, and full-time faculty at the Fort Lauderdale East campus are responsible for curriculum development.

Although curriculum delivery in this School is often based on the use of innovative distance education modalities, students receive services in a fairly traditional manner:

- Students are assigned a full-time advisor.

- Students are admitted into the program through a central Admissions Office.

- Students work with the University's Office of Student Financial Aid for assistance with financial aid programs, grants, loans, and scholarships.

- All students are required to attend a program orientation at the School's Fort Lauderdale East campus facilities.

The School is currently evaluating the effectiveness of distance education from the viewpoints of personal development and employer judgment. Results will be used to assist the faculty as they constantly monitor and change the curriculum in this rapidly changing discipline.

School of Business and Entrepreneurship

The School of Business and Entrepreneurship offers a variety of master's-level and doctoral-level courses, both on-campus and off-campus. Although computer-mediated communication is gaining greater use in the School, all off-campus instruction is currently offered through field-based delivery models, where faculty meet with students at various cluster locations. In addition to field-based instruction at the local level, nearly all students attend one or more intensive week-long institutes or workshops. Although input is received from field-based personnel, administrators at the Fort Lauderdale East campus are responsible for program organization and full-time faculty at the Fort Lauderdale East campus are responsible for curriculum development.

Cluster coordinators have an important role in communicating between administrators at the Fort Lauderdale East campus, students at the local cluster, and campus-based full-time faculty as well as adjunct faculty. Even so, the locus of administrative responsibility is at the program office, on the Fort Lauderdale East campus:

- All advising is offered through the School of Business and Entrepreneurship's campus-based Office of Student Services.

- Admissions are centralized, controlled by full-time administrators, faculty, and support staff at the Fort Lauderdale East campus.

- Increasingly, more students in the School of Business and Entrepreneurship are using the centralized computing services offered by the University. The School maintains a campus-based computing and networking support staff.

- Students also have access to local libraries, with special accommodations for the use of these local libraries coordinated through the University's Office of Resource Information for External Programs (*Directory of Selected Academic Libraries Near Off-Campus Program Sites*, 1996). Students with appropriate expertise are also able to use the University's Electronic Library.

- Students work with the University's Office of Student Financial Aid for assistance with financial aid programs, grants, loans, and scholarships.

- Students meet with local site personnel for program orientation. At many sites, Fort Lauderdale East Campus administrators and/or full-time faculty also attend these orientations.

Along with participation in assessments coordinated through Research and Planning, the School also participated in an AACSB MBA Student Satisfaction Survey. The results of this study, when available, will assist the faculty and administration in decision-making relative to distance education practices and opportunities.

REPORTED SATISFACTION WITH PROGRAM AND SERVICES

In an attempt to offer a common University-wide assessment of distance education, Research and Planning coordinated with the major academic centers offering instruction through distance learning modalities to assess graduate and student satisfaction with program and services. In addition to statements that were obviously center-specific, it was agreed that the assessment instruments would also be worded so that participants would respond to a series of common statements, allowing for greater use of the data.

There were two exceptions to the decision to include graduates and students from all academic centers with major distance programs:

- The Center for Psychological Studies had recently completed a *Self-Study* for the American Psychological Association. It was therefore considered unnecessary, and possibly an obtrusion to graduates and students in this Center, to include them in the invited sample of what may have been viewed a redundant activity.

- Because the College of Pharmacy has only recently implemented distance education activities, it was equally decided that it would be inappropriate to include constituents from this College in the invited sample. Of course, constituents from the College of Pharmacy will be included in future assessments of distance education at the University.

For the assessment of on-campus students and off-campus students (*South Florida vs. Other Locations: Comparing Student Responses to a Satisfaction Survey*, 1996), the population for the study consisted of all Spring Term 1996 students enrolled in academic centers with distance education programs (N = 12,499) . The invited sample consisted of students enrolled in the Fort Lauderdale area, Melbourne, Orlando, Tampa, and at cluster locations in other states, including Atlanta, Georgia; Birmingham, Alabama; Kansas City, Missouri; Northern Virginia and Richmond, Virginia; Philadelphia and Williamsport, Pennsylvania; Phoenix, Arizona; Wilmington, Delaware; and at international locations in the Bahamas, Canada, Germany, Jamaica, and Panama. There was sufficient evidence that the responding

sample (N = 1,977) was in parity with the population in terms of known demographic characteristics.

Survey statements were worded using language directly from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' *Criteria for Accreditation* (1996). All statements received a mean rating of 3.0 or greater (1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied), indicating positive satisfaction with academic program and student services. In view of place of class attendance and subsequent levels of satisfaction, there was nearly an equal three-way distribution of outcomes: for approximately one-third of all the survey statements, there was no difference between on-campus students and their off-campus counterparts; for approximately one-third of all statements, on-campus students offered a higher mean rating than their off-campus counterparts; and for approximately one-third of all survey statements, off-campus students offered a higher mean rating than their on-campus counterparts. Results are summarized in Table 5.

Two areas where differences were noticeable and have direct impact on the University's operations regarded: (1) library and learning resource materials, and (2) computing and training in technology. Although mean ratings for these areas were greater than 3.0, it is still important to note that off-campus students offered significantly lower ratings than their on-campus counterparts for these two broad areas. Recognizing that there was a need for additional attention to improvement in the computing infrastructure, the University has budgeted for Fiscal Year 1996 - 1997 over $3.6 million for technology and related capital expenditures. Including payroll, benefits, network expenses, and technology-related capital expenditures, the University's Fiscal Year 1996 - 1997 budget includes over $8.5 million for academic and administrative computing.

Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education

Graduates

As presented in *Graduates of the Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education Reflect on Their Experience with Nova Southeastern University* (1996), there was ample evidence to conclude that graduates are, overall, very pleased with their experience with the University. Over 95 percent of all respondents indicated that they would recommend their program to a friend or acquaintance. The strong practitioner orientation of the Center (mean years of professional work experience prior to enrollment = 13.4 years) and interest in career and professional development were found throughout this study.

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Table 5

Ratings of Selected Statements Related to Academic Programs and Student Services

	On-Campus			Off-Campus		
Statement	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Clarity of written admission policies . .	1137	4.1	0.9	738	4.1	0.8
Clarity of written policy on transfer of credit from other institutions	921	3.9	1.0	625	3.8	1.0
Clarity of written completion requirements	1110	4.0	0.9	727	4.1	0.9
Clarity of written curricular offerings, as identified in program catalog	1124	4.1	0.9	723	4.0	0.8
Program orientation	1049	3.8	1.0	718	4.0	0.9
Length of the academic program	1154	4.1	1.0	744	4.3	0.9
Length of the individual courses	1155	4.2	0.9	744	4.2	0.8
Instructional methods	1141	4.0	0.8	742	4.1	0.8
Delivery system	1096	3.9	0.8	718	4.1	0.9
Course registration activities	1146	3.8	1.1	738	3.9	1.0
Published grading policy	1097	4.0	0.9	705	3.9	1.0
Interaction with administrative personnel	1098	3.8	1.1	738	3.9	1.1
Competency of the faculty	1138	4.0	0.9	732	4.3	0.8
Quality of the learning environment . .	1154	4.0	0.9	758	4.1	0.8
Process for assigning students to advisors	929	3.3	1.2	545	3.5	1.1
Quality of advising	989	3.4	1.2	591	3.6	1.1
Applied nature of thesis, practicum, or dissertation	696	3.8	0.9	492	4.0	0.9
Opportunity for intellectual growth . . .	1137	4.2	0.8	736	4.3	0.8

Table 5 (Continued)

Ratings of Selected Statements Related to Academic Programs and Student Services

	On-Campus			Off-Campus		
Statement	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Faculty and student interaction	1126	4.1	0.9	723	4.2	0.9
Exposure to research scholars	826	3.5	1.1	589	3.7	1.1
Opportunity for peer interaction	1107	4.1	0.8	740	4.4	0.9
Clarity of program catalog	1119	4.0	0.8	693	4.0	0.9
Correctness of student records (including transcripts)	997	3.9	1.0	656	3.8	1.1
Availability of library and learning resource materials	1099	3.7	1.2	692	3.4	1.2
Adequacy of library and learning resource materials	1079	3.6	1.2	664	3.4	1.2
Orientation program relative to library services	922	3.4	1.2	642	3.4	1.1
Training in access to information in electronic and other formats	946	3.4	1.2	606	3.2	1.2
Availability of computing resources	968	3.8	1.0	596	3.2	1.2
Adequacy of computing resources	944	3.8	1.0	573	3.2	1.2
Access to information through technology	971	3.8	1.0	628	3.4	1.2
Instructional support services (e.g., educational equipment and specialized facilities such as laboratories, audio visual and duplicating services)	862	3.6	1.0	545	3.3	1.2
Infusion of information technology into the curricula	953	3.7	1.0	601	3.4	1.1
Provisions for training in the use of technology	898	3.5	1.1	570	3.3	1.1

Table 5 (Continued)

Ratings of Selected Statements Related to Academic Programs and Student Services

	On-Campus			Off-Campus		
Statement	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Student development services	742	3.5	1.0	485	3.4	1.1
Counseling and career development . .	736	3.4	1.0	477	3.2	1.1
Remedial services available	549	3.4	1.0	340	3.3	1.0
Student government opportunities	496	3.4	1.0	283	3.1	1.1
Student behavior policies and procedures	726	3.8	0.9	437	3.7	1.0
Financial aid services	812	3.7	1.1	455	3.4	1.2
Health services	477	3.4	1.0	223	3.0	1.0
Alumni affairs	481	3.5	0.9	261	3.2	1.0
Refund policies when withdrawing from courses	663	3.5	1.1	355	3.4	1.0
Adequacy of physical resources in classrooms	1042	3.6	1.0	653	3.6	1.0
Safety and security of classroom buildings and the learning environment	1083	4.0	0.9	692	4.0	0.9
Overall quality of this academic program	1119	4.0	0.8	724	4.2	0.8

Rating Scale

1	Very Dissatisfied	4	Satisfied
2	Dissatisfied	5	Very Satisfied
3	Neutral, Neither Agree nor Disagree	NA	Not Applicable
		U	Unknown or Unable to Answer

Students

Attention was directed, in *Students in the Abraham S. Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education Respond to a Satisfaction Survey: A Comparison Between On-Campus Students and Off-Campus Students* (1996), to differences between levels of satisfaction from students who attended the majority of their classes on the University's Davie campus and the immediate Broward County area (on-campus students) and their counterparts who attended the majority of their classes at other locations (off-campus students). Survey statements were worded using language directly from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' *Criteria for Accreditation* (1996). All statements received a mean rating of 3.0 or greater (1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied), indicating positive satisfaction with academic program and student services. For approximately two-thirds of all survey statements, off-campus students provided higher mean ratings than on-campus students.

Farquhar Center for Undergraduate Studies

Graduates

Graduates of Nova Southeastern University's Undergraduate Programs Tell Us What they Think About Their University Experience (1996) provided evidence that graduates are, overall, very pleased with the University's impact on their career and major. Statements related to the effectiveness of the University's undergraduate programs generally received high ratings and nearly 85 percent of all survey respondents indicated that they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that they would recommend the University to others. Statements related to basic competence in the use of computers, however, received lower ratings. Graduates offered the highest rating for skills in word processing and the lowest rating for use of the Internet.

Students

In *Students in the James M. Farquhar Center for Undergraduate Studies Respond to a Satisfaction Survey: A Comparison Between On-Campus Students and Off-Campus Students* (1996), comparisons were made to levels of satisfaction from students who attended the majority of their classes on the University's Davie Campus and the immediate Broward County area (on-campus students) and their counterparts who attended the majority of their classes at other locations (off-campus students). Survey statements were worded using language directly from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' *Criteria for Accreditation* (1996). Over 98 percent of all statements received a mean rating of 3.0 or greater (1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied), indicating positive satisfaction with academic program and student services. Overall ratings between on-campus students and off-campus students were nearly equal. For approximately 45 percent of all survey statements,

off-campus students provided higher mean ratings than on-campus students and for approximately 55 percent of all survey statements, on-campus students provided higher mean ratings than off-campus students.

School of Computer and Information Sciences

Graduates

Graduates of the School of Computer and Information Sciences Offer Judgment on Their Experience With Nova Southeastern University (1996) provided evidence that graduates from this School were very pleased with their experience with the University. Graduates also offered positive ratings on the practitioner orientation of the School's graduate programs in the computing disciplines. This report also served as an assessment of computer-mediated communication, in real-time and delayed-time, as a medium for distance education activities. Overall, graduates exhibited positive ratings for computer-mediated communication as a modality for distance education.

Students

Student assessments from other academic centers focused on differences between levels of satisfaction from students who attended the majority of their classes on the University's Davie campus and the immediate Broward County area (on-campus students) and their counterparts who attended the majority of their classes at other locations (off-campus students). Because computer-mediated communication is a pervasive medium for curricular delivery in the School of Computer and Information Sciences, it was decided to present results from *Students in the School of Computer and Information Sciences Respond to a Satisfaction Survey: Outcomes from an Academic Center Using Computer-Mediated Communication* (1996) in collapsed format. Any reference to place of class attendance would be a misleading indicator in this academic center.

Survey statements were worded using language directly from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' *Criteria for Accreditation* (1996). All statements received a mean rating of 3.0 or greater (1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied), indicating positive satisfaction with academic program and student services. In addition, respondents offered significantly higher ratings to statements related to the University's technology-based information resource infrastructure than was offered by respondents from other academic centers.

Graduates

As presented in *Graduates of the School of Business and Entrepreneurship Reflect Upon Their Academic Experiences* (1996), graduates reported that the School had a positive impact on professional development and career preparation. Over 90 percent of all graduates reported that they achieved their educational goals and they had acquired the knowledge and skills need for their career. Although the study indicated that some support areas require attention, overall, graduates reported high levels of satisfaction with instructional methods and delivery systems used by faculty.

Students

In *Students in the School of Business and Entrepreneurship Respond to a Satisfaction Survey: A Comparison Between On-Campus Students and Off-Campus Students* (1996), attention was directed to differences between levels of satisfaction from students who attended the majority of their classes at the University's Fort Lauderdale East campus and the immediate Broward County area (on-campus students) and their counterparts who attended the majority of their classes at other locations (off-campus students). Survey statements were worded using language directly from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' *Criteria for Accreditation* (1996). Over 92 percent of all statements received a mean rating of 3.0 or greater (1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied), indicating positive satisfaction with academic program and student services. Overall ratings between on-campus students and off-campus students were nearly equal. For approximately 45 percent of all survey statements, off-campus students provided higher mean ratings than on-campus students and for approximately 55 percent of all survey statements, on-campus students provided higher mean ratings than off-campus students.

SUMMARY

The University was an early pioneer in the use of distance education. Although distance education modalities were eagerly accepted by students and fully integrated into the 1985 reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (*Self-Study: 1983 - 1985*, 1985), the University's *Master Plan* (1995) provided the reminder that other universities were less than pleased with these activities at that time. The *Master Plan* (1995, p.52), however, equally identified that "some of our current competitors were among the University's detractors in the 1970s and 1980s criticizing the use of distance education."

Although there are those who still argue against distance education, warning that it will "reduce education to a commodity that can be 'delivered' cheaply and purchased course by course" (Cameron; 1996, p.B6), this degree of flexibility that makes it possible for adult students to pursue higher education is the very reason why so many state university systems are vigorously exploring the potential of distance education. Moore (1994, p.2) offered detailed plans of how Florida's State University System now considers the use of distance education as a means of offering educational opportunities for all citizens, regardless of availability or proximity to state educational facilities:

> The State University System is committed to the concept of providing instruction to as many of Florida's citizens as possible, including those who are physically remote from the main campus of a university or other location or campus of program origin.

The desire to offer distance education programs is so intense that a Florida Board of Regents committee recently had to approve new policy that "aims to avoid university turf wars" (Horine, p.8B). A similar concern among state university system schools was recently reported in Kentucky, another state in the Southern Association (*Distance-Learning Courses Spark Turf Battle in Kentucky*; 1996, p.A21).

Interest in distance education is by no means restricted to the 11 states in the Southern Association. With support at the highest level of state government, the governors of Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming have all singled some degree of support for a "virtual university" that would employ the use of forms of technology to offer distance-education courses (*10 Governors Pledge Support for "Virtual University;"* 1996, pA15). Blumenstky (1996, p.A34) reported how California plans to decline participation in the proposed 10-state "virtual university' and instead plans to create and market, as early as 1997, its own courses "delivered to students throughout the world through television, the Internet, and other technologies."

Based on activities and requests for information associated with the *Self-Study* process, it is evident that:

- Although input is gladly received from a wide variety of adjunct personnel, for all academic centers that offer distance education programs:
  - Full-time campus-based administrators are responsible for program organization. There were no exceptions to this finding.
  - Full-time campus-based faculty are responsible for the oversight of curriculum development.

- The University has conducted an extensive review of distance education among the academic centers with major distance education activities. Participants included recent graduates as well as current students:

  - To offer some degree of standardization and quality assurance, these reviews were coordinated by the University's Office of Research and Planning.

  - Findings have been summarized into separate reports, issued to Senior Administrators, Deans, Program Directors, and Faculty.

  - To be as inclusive as possible, executive summaries of each report are distributed by electronic mail to approximately 350 faculty, administrators, and program staff. Requests are then taken from individuals who wish to have the full report.

- To further chronicle the distance education evaluation process used by various programs at the University, the Executive Provost for Academic Affairs assembled a Task Force "to share ideas, models, and issues regarding distance education programs across the University, and to focus on current methods of evaluating NSU's distance education programs both within and beyond the purview of the structured institutional effectiveness process" (*Institutional Self-Study Report Addendum*; 1996, p.18). Evaluation of the effectiveness of distance education was placed into six areas:

  - Evaluation of Curriculum

  - Evaluation of Instruction

  - Evaluation of Support Services (University and Centers)

  - Evaluation of Student Learning

  - Evaluation of Student Outcomes

  - Evaluation of Program Effectiveness

One outcome from this extensive examination of distance education, and the many anecdotal comments offered as margin notes on completed survey instruments, is that student acceptance of the practice of distance education is a certainty. Recognizing that professionals must participate in educational endeavors as a life-long activity, due to time-demands and skill-level expectations in our current information and knowledge-oriented market system, the frequency with which adults engage in distance education activities will only increase. The major issue addressed in this report was the need to offer some degree of assessment, beyond anecdotal comments, on how distance education is incorporated into activities that meet the University's mission. Based on the many assessments recently conducted at the University, this report provides the summary conclusion that distance education students are able to gain

personal and professional advantage and that they equal their campus-based peers on every pertinent measured indicator.

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